

Reinterpreting the theoretical model and methodological tools of 'memory studies' in the context of the russian-ukrainian war*

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Abstract.

The purpose of this research is to justify the feasibility of developing a new theoretical model of memory studies and effective methodological tools for studying the Ukrainian mnemonic space in the context of the russian-Ukrainian war, based on the need to correct them and practically counteract the historical propaganda of the aggressor country, the RF. **Research methodology.** The proposed study was conducted using methodological approaches from memory studies and comparative historiography, which made it possible to identify and describe existing and promising theoretical models for studying the mnemonic sphere. The productivity of the theoretical paradigms themselves was determined through empirical verification of the initial scientific hypothesis about the extreme memory regime in conditions of aggression. **The scientific novelty** of the study lies in the redefinition of existing theoretical approaches and methodological tools of memory studies, which is caused by new challenges faced by researchers in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine. The proposed deconstruction of the theoretical foundations of the model of "post-Soviet nationalist conflict" and the concepts of "Western epistemological colonialism." **Conclusions.** The necessity of overcoming a systemic methodological error is ignoring the fact of russian aggression, not only military but also memorial – is argued. It is proposed to abandon the description of memory politics as antagonistic within the framework of the model of "post-Soviet nationalist conflict." A more productive and promising alternative is considered: the theoretical model of memory of "different civilizations," namely the conflict between the Central and Eastern European culture of memory and the Eurasian one. It is assumed that such an approach could bring us closer to exhausting the potential of antagonistic memory and open up opportunities for the formation of a culture of agonistic memory. It is proposed to focus on the analysis of the transformation of different types of mnemonic actors (actors of memory) and modes of memory. It is substantiated that the deconstruction of the repressive type of historical memory discourse of the aggressor state, the RF, is of both theoretical scientific and practical social interest.

Keywords: 'memory studies' theory, methodological tools, russian-ukrainian war, historical politics /propaganda, memory aggression, theoretical model of memory of "different civilizations," Central and Eastern European culture of memory, types of mnemonic actors, memory regimes.

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Переосмислення теоретичної моделі та методологічного інструментарію memory studies в умовах російсько-української війни

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Анотація.

Метою статті є обґрунтування доцільності вироблення нової теоретичної моделі memory studies та результативного методологічного інструментарію студіювання українського мнемонічного простору в умовах російсько-української війни, виходячи з потреби їхньої корекції та практичної протидії історичній пропаганді країни-агресора РФ. **Методологія дослідження.** Пропоноване дослідження проведене з використанням методологічних підходів memory studies та компаративної історіографії, які дозволили виявити та описати існуючі та перспективні теоретичні моделі студіювання мнемонічної сфери. Продуктивність самих теоретичних парадигм з'ясовувалася шляхом емпіричної верифікації первинної наукової гіпотези про екстремальний режим пам'яті в умовах агресії. **Наукова новизна** дослідження полягає у переосмисленні існуючих теоретичних підходів та методологічного інструментарію memory studies, яке зумовлене новими викликами, що постали перед дослідниками в умовах російської агресії проти України. Запропонована деконструкція теоретичних засад моделі «пострадянського націоналістичного конфлікту» та концепцій «західного епістемологічного колоніалізму». **Висновки.** Аргументована необхідність подолання системної методологічної помилки – ігнорування факту російської агресії, не тільки військової, але й пам'яттєвої. Запропоновано відмовитися від опису політики пам'яті як антагоністичної у рамках моделі «пострадянського націоналістичного конфлікту». Розглянуто більш продуктивну і перспективну альтернативу теоретичну модель пам'яті «різних цивілізацій», а саме конфлікту між центрально-східноєвропейською культурою пам'яті та євразійською. Зроблено припущення, що такий підхід може наблизити до вичерпання потенціалу антагоністичної пам'яті і відкрити можливості до формування культури агоністичної пам'яті. Пропонується зосередитися на аналізі трансформації різних типів мнемонічних діячів (акторів пам'яті) та режимів пам'яті. Обґрунтовано, що деконструкція репресивного типу історичного пам'яттєвого дискурсу держави-агресора РФ становить одночасно теоретичний науковий, і практичний соціальний інтерес.

Ключові слова: теорія memory studies, методологічний інструментарій, російсько-українська війна, історична політика/пропаганда, пам'яттєва агресія, теоретична модель пам'яті «різних цивілізацій», центрально-східноєвропейська культура пам'яті, типи мнемонічних діячів, режими пам'яті

Framing the problem. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, initially as a hybrid war, the occupation of Crimea, the local war in Donbas, and, over time, a full-scale armed invasion, not only poses a huge threat to the preservation of state sovereignty and national identity of Ukrainians, but also creates a large number of challenges for the scientific sphere, including historical science. In particular, there is an urgent need to rethink the approaches of Ukrainian historians to researching the retrospective of relations with an aggressive neighbor. But no less urgent tasks arise in the field of theoretical and methodological re-equipment of our historical workshop, including such a currently sought-after field as *memory studies*.

Even so, it is worth starting with a more general issue – deciding how to describe the contemporary russian, to be more precise, russian-centric historical narrative, especially the one used as a significant part of the aggressor state's propaganda and, in essence, as an ideological justification for the aggression itself. Undoubtedly, this situation requires discussion among a wider

professional circle of Ukrainian historians, and in the future, with the involvement of foreign colleagues, in order to reach a certain consensus. We consider this publication as a proposal for such a discussion and offer our interpretation of contemporary Russian texts produced by historians, political scientists, sociologists, and all those representing the social sciences and humanities. We believe that the term "Russian historiography," which implicitly contains a scientific component, cannot be used in relation to them. This is not about denying the Russian side its scientific status altogether. Obviously, there are still some researchers in the aggressor country and beyond its borders who are trying to preserve the reputation of history as a science, but they are currently on the margins, almost completely subordinate to Putin's propaganda machine of the RF's historical Smithy. In a situation where Russian scholars agree that the Kremlin dictator is recognized as the leading expert in the field of historical knowledge, it is difficult to talk about the scientific nature of such a narrative. It is also important to mention that the vast majority of Russian historians have publicly supported the aggression against Ukraine since 2014. And with the start of the full-scale invasion, a whole new direction has emerged in Russian "humanities," within which pseudoscientific arguments are being mass-produced to justify the aggression – the expediency of the so-called 'special military operation' (Ivangorodsky, 2024).

We are currently witnessing a paradoxical situation in the field of *memory studies*, the situation that requires careful analysis and an appropriate response. It is important to note that this particular field of study is the most sensitive and, at the same time, the most vulnerable to the profanation of historical knowledge and its transformation into a purely propagandistic construct. It is noteworthy that this applies not only to the aggressor country, but also to Western scholars and some specialists in this field of Ukrainian origin. It turns out that the theoretical model of "nationalist conflict" remains quite a priority, if not dominant, through which the mnemonic space of Ukraine is viewed as incomplete, deformed by the excessive radicalism of nationalist-minded elites, and any deviations from the Russian-centric narrative are classified as exclusive, dividing Ukrainian society and provoking a corresponding negative reaction from the Russian side. We consider the assertion that it was precisely this position of the Ukrainian side that provoked Russian aggression to be an extreme manifestation of such excessive speculative constructs.

Analysis of resources and recent studies. It should be mentioned that the theoretical and methodological foundations of *memory studies* in the Ukrainian social sciences and humanities were formed under the strong influence of Western scientific tradition, with certain corrective impulses from the Russian side (the usefulness of the latter seems rather doubtful, as will be discussed in the main text). Similar logistics for introducing theoretical innovations into Ukrainian research practice can be observed in other segments of contemporary historical knowledge.

It is generally recognized that the most significant influence on the formation of Ukrainian memorial studies was exerted by the classical works of Western European and American researchers M. Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 1968; Halbwachs, 2007), P. Nora (Nora, 2014), P. Connerton (Connerton, 1989; 2024), J. Assmann (Jan Assmann, 2004), A. Assmann (A. Assmann, 2012), J. Rüsen (Rüsen, 2010), P. Hatton (Hatton, 2003), and others.

An important component of adjusting the theoretical foundations for our issue is research into social memory in wartime (Suleiman, 2006; Weber, 2015; Memory and Cultural History, 2014) and the formation of a culture of memory in the post-war situation (Lagrou, 1999; Edwards, 2015; 2018; Demshuk, 2012; Johnson, 2018). Interesting examples of research into memory discourse can be found in postcolonial studies. Among them, it is worth mentioning the texts by B. Stora on mnemonic problems in France regarding the controversial colonial Algerian heritage and J. Bertrand on the identity conflict surrounding the problems of the occupation of Northern Cyprus (Stora, 1999; 2009; Bertrand, 2009).

Some Ukrainian historians have also used the theoretical developments of their Russian colleagues for a long time**. The conceptual texts of L. Repina (History and Memory, 2006; Dialogues with Time, 2008; Repina, 2013), I. Savelyeva (Savelyeva, 2003), A. Poletayev (Poletayev, 2006), M. Koposov (Koposov, 2011; 2018) and O. Miller (Methodological issues, 2018; Symbolic aspects, 2021) were particularly popular. But the limitations of such an intellectual resource were often not taken into account. On the one hand, the vast majority of Russian theoretical models were of a secondary, derivative nature, since they were modifications of Western intellectual concepts. On the other hand, in the theoretical constructions of Russian researchers there was a fairly stable tendency to strengthen imperial great-power connotations. A striking example of the latter is the position of O. Miller, who for a long time positioned himself as an unbiased academic historian, and in the current conditions quite

** References to publications (citations of publications) of the aggressor state of the Russian Federation are made in order to counter hostile narratives, information threats and hostile propaganda in the information sphere (in accordance with the letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 1/19894-24 dated 10.25.2024).

openly demonstrates typical pro-imperial approaches (Miller, 2016; 2020; 2020a; 2022; 2023; 2024). Hence, in our opinion, the interpretation of historical memory was artificially implanted into the Ukrainian scientific space, primarily as a purely political instrumentalist project, with special attention to the determining role of official historical policy in its formation, and the policy of memory itself was a priori viewed as a conscious manipulation of historical knowledge in favor of the ruling (nationalist) elites.

The theoretical foundations of contemporary Ukrainian *memory studies* are described in detail in the works of L. Nahorna (Nahorna, 2012), A. Kyrydon (Kyrydon, 2016), G. Kasianov (Kasianov, 2018), O. Hrytsenko (Hrytsenko, 2022), and other researchers. We consider the conceptual approaches of O. Hrytsenko, who introduced an extremely important sociocultural aspect into the study of collective memory and historical politics, to be particularly productive for our research. It is precisely this paradigm that brings us closer to a civilizational distinction in the perception of mnemonic realities of wartime. These developments undoubtedly constitute an important basis for the further theoretical and methodological “rearmament” of our historical research.

But we consider the Achilles heel that correct theoretical constructions quite often did not work when studying the real state of historical memory of Ukrainian society and especially the current politics of memory. A typical example of such irrational use can be M. Minakov's conclusions that the official policy of memory in Ukraine, based on the principles of conservative ethnocentrism, establishes an ideological monopoly, allegedly neglecting many social, cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups and thereby splitting society (Minakov, 2020). At the same time, this author and many other researchers did not notice that the phenomena they described occurred in the context of Russian aggression, which significantly changed the mnemonic space and required an appropriate defensive reaction from the country that was the victim of this invasion.

The authors of the research have already offered their own vision of methodological approaches to studying the politics of memory in the temporarily occupied territories (Masnenko, 2022; Masnenko, Telvak, Telvak, Yanyshyn, 2021; Telvak, Ilnytskyi, 2023; Ilnytskyi, Telvak, 2024). The current publication is focused on the further development of the considerations expressed. At the same time, the authors relied on the verification of their own scientific hypothesis and the results obtained during the implementation of several scientific research projects on the specified issues.

Objective of the article. To justify the feasibility of developing a new theoretical model for *memory studies* and effective methodological tools for studying the Ukrainian mnemonic space in the extreme conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war, based on the need for their substantial correction and practical counteraction to the historical propaganda of the aggressor country, the RF.

The subject matter. First of all, it is necessary to determine how appropriate and unbiased from the point of view of academic discourse can be the study of memory issues during a fierce military confrontation, accompanied by equally antagonistic “wars of memory.” This is especially true when representing the scientific community of a country that has been the victim of aggression. Will the proposed methodological suggestions “fall outside” the purely academic field and enter the risky zone of counter-propaganda? Moreover, some researchers of mnemonic issues have already expressed similar concerns. According to G. Kasianov, in Ukraine, scholars who study Russian memory politics may be perceived as collaborators – both legally and in public opinion – if they do not follow the official guidelines for fighting the enemy and instead attempt to present a balanced academic analysis. Allegedly: “The very fact of scientific interest in Russian memory politics can arouse suspicion. Regardless of the content, a positive public assessment of the ideas and works of Russian scientists can be seen as the spread of ‘Kremlin narratives’ (Kasianov, 2022). The authors strongly disagree with this position. This strange statement by G. Kasianov is clearly an attempt to invent a kind of “intellectual alibi” to justify his own bias, especially given his previous work in the field of historical memory issues.

Instead, we believe that analyzing the aggressor's memory /historical propaganda policy, primarily the essence of the “Russian world,” Putinism, Russian historical myths, encroachments on Ukrainian historical heritage, actors/disseminators of memory discourse, the aggressor state's memorial legislation, commemorative practices (especially in temporarily occupied territories), the anti-Ukrainian memory component in the education system, and the involvement of professional historians in official propaganda will not only enrich the issues addressed by Ukrainian memory studies, but also develop an effective mechanism to counter the RF's memory invasion. Such an approach not only does not contradict academic standards, but also updates them, giving them a much-needed social orientation.

Analyzing the optimal theoretical model of *memory studies*, it is worth recalling the differences in the internal nature of historical knowledge and mnemonic knowledge. If historical knowledge is focused on the past and is formed on the basis of historical facts and interpretations of the researcher, then mnemonic knowledge concerns mainly the present and is a constantly reproduced construct of social ideas about the past. Moreover, this memory construct is not necessarily based on historical

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facts, and professional historians are far from the first to influence its formation. Accordingly, the next aspect is to determine the most productive theoretical model of memory studies from a methodological point of view. In our opinion, it is necessary to abandon the use of the research model of the “*post-Soviet nationalist conflict*”, widespread in Western expert and scientific circles (and blindly borrowed by some Ukrainian authors (Kasianov, 2021)), which turned out to be unproductive, and to focus on studying the topic in the coordinates of the formation of a memorial tradition, a culture of memory in the space of “*different civilizational models*”. In a broader sense – European and Eurasian.

Moreover, it is easy to see that the adherents of the model of “*post-Soviet nationalist conflict*” openly or covertly profess the ideas of “*Western epistemological colonialism*”, which are strangely combined with Russian great power. Their use of colonial rhetoric creates an unequal division between widely recognized “*stable*” centers (in their interpretation – *Russia*), which are legitimized by academic knowledge, politics and a monopoly on “*theory*”, including in the field of *memory studies*, and “*unstable*” peripheries (in this case – *Ukraine*), which are supposedly characterized by localism, lack of scientific maturity and a non-standard approach to research problems, which is often contemptuously assessed as “*emotional*” and “*radical*”.

For instance, in a 2021 review article, P.A. Rudling “*modestly*” hinted that he, as a “*highly qualified expert*,” could help confused /ignorant Ukrainians settle the memory wars: “*If the Ukrainian government had relied on international expertise rather than its own memory managers, some of these memory conflicts could have been avoided or defused before they escalated into diplomatic conflicts with very real political consequences for Ukraine*”.

There are quite reasonable doubts as for the quality of such “*international expertise*.” As N. Bernard-Kovalchuk rightly pointed out, even in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, narratives that directly echoed the pseudo-historical theses of Putin’s propaganda were spread in the Western academic environment: “*A number of leading Western historians continued to contribute to the formation of an intellectual framework within which Russian irredentist claims to Ukraine could be perceived as acceptable or legitimate (Bernard-Kovalchuk, 2025)*”. A. Zayarniuk provided a detailed analysis of the epistemological disconnection of the Western academic community from Ukrainian realities, showing how the refusal to recognize the Holodomor as genocide, the demonization of Ukrainian nationalism, and the emphasis on Ukraine’s “*internal problems*” created the impression of symmetry between the aggressor and the victim. At the same time, the lack of an adequate academic response to the instrumentalization of victory in World War II and the revival of the Stalin cult in Russia shaped a historiographical discourse that resonated with Kremlin narratives and downplayed the threat of aggression. The researcher sees the recovery of the Western academic environment in a significant change in research models, a kind of decolonization of research on Central and Eastern Europe, and advises leaving the “*decolonization*” of its own history and culture to Ukraine. This process, according to A. Zayarniuk, should be accompanied by the “*de-imperialization*” of the imperial optics of Western academia (Zayarniuk, 2022).

Returning to the *European civilizational model* of the mnemonic landscape /room, it is proposed to apply a clearer structuring of it by identifying several separate but interrelated segments: *Western European, Central and Eastern European, Balkan*, etc. The peculiarity of the historical culture of the Central and Eastern European space, and Ukraine within it, lies in its burdened post-genocidal, post-totalitarian Soviet legacy, which forms a more complex structure of memory. This is because the pan-European transnational memory of the Holocaust is joined by the memory of the Holodomor and other repressive actions of the communist era. It is positive that the European community is moving towards a common perception of the mnemonic concerns of post-communist countries (the 2009 decision of the European Parliament and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to commemorate August 23 as the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes). In the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, these processes have noticeably intensified and are being considered at the state level. Thus, on August 3, 2022, the leaders of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Romania signed a joint appeal to the European Union to pay more attention to condemning the crimes of all totalitarian regimes of the 20th century and honoring the memory of their victims (Leaders of Eastern European countries, 2022). The place of Eastern Europe in the common European mnemonic space is also being explored by scholars. A productive example of this approach can be found in the monograph ‘*Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*’, particularly in the chapters devoted to the prehistory of post-Soviet “*wars of memory*” in Ukraine (by Andriy Portnov) and Russian expansionism (by Ilya Kalinin) (Memory and Theory, 2013).

Although, there is another approach, demonstrated by Russian researchers, in particular O. Miller. He believes that the former post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe have destroyed the balanced culture of memory formed in Western Europe, based on consensus in the assessment of the Holocaust, and, using an aggressively instrumentalist approach to the past, imposed their own extreme model, which emphasizes the suffering of their own peoples and identifies Russia as the main threat. Predictably, he included Ukraine among those responsible for reformatting

European memory politics (Miller, 2016; 2020). Thus, we are witnessing an unproductive attempt not only to distort European memory culture, but also to shift the blame for the “memory wars” from the aggressor country, the RF, to the post-communist countries. Ultimately, a manipulative approach to the assessment of the European model of memory has become typical of contemporary Russian discourse (Voronovich, 2018).

The next important, even decisive, component in understanding the current mnemonic situation in Ukraine and throughout Central and Eastern Europe should be the consideration of Russian aggression (both hybrid and open, armed) and its impact on memory politics. It is surprising that many researchers of memory issues have long overlooked this and continued their studies of the Ukrainian situation in isolation from the tragic realities (M. Minakov (Minakov, 2020), A. Plekhanov (Plekhanov, 2018), Y. Yurchenko (Yurchenko, 2017)).

Gradually, theses about Russian aggression against Ukraine are nevertheless appearing in studies of historical memory (this is especially evident after the full-scale invasion of 2022, which was extremely difficult to ignore), but some researchers still continue to focus on criticizing the policies of the Ukrainian government and right-wing memory actors, which, in their opinion, provoke not only internal but also external conflicts. In our opinion, this approach consciously or unconsciously distorts reality, turning it into a “crooked mirror” in which causes and effects are reversed.

Thus, in his 2018 monograph, G. Kasianov examines Ukraine's confrontation with Russia in terms of so-called “brotherly rivalry” and characterizes historical politics in the international dimension as “competition between national projects and national identities.” He describes the Russian-Ukrainian conflict as “a conflict between Soviet-nostalgic (with elements of imperial-nostalgic) and national /nationalist narratives of memory promoted at the level of state ideology” (Kasianov, 2018, s. 389-390). Moreover, the Russian model of memory is a priori defined as inclusive (unifying, in particular through the formula of the “Russian world”), while the Ukrainian model is, on the contrary, defined as exclusive and divisive. As we can see, this intellectual construct lacks a definition of the aggressor and, accordingly, the victim of aggression.

In another text, G. Kasianov considers “the annexation of Crimea, the war in the east of the country, and the absence of a structured and politically mobilized opposition” to be only the main circumstances that “contribute to the spread of the nationalist narrative of memory (its definition of Ukraine's official memory policy) (Kasianov, 2018a, s. 277)”. Thus, Russia's aggressive actions are interpreted only as accompanying circumstances in which the so-called apologization of radical nationalism in the Ukrainian public space takes place.

Ultimately, Kasianov and Osadchuk acknowledged the fact of aggression and its impact on the mnemonic space: “Memory wars between the two countries have become an integral part of the armed conflict, in which Russia plays the role of the aggressor, and Ukraine is forced to seek a symmetrical response (Kasianov & Osipchuk, 2017, s. 92)”. At the same time, criticizing the process of decommunization in Ukraine, they emphasize its artificial “linking” to the needs of countering aggression: “From the very beginning of “decommunization,” the Soviet legacy was presented in official representations as the ideological basis for the actions of the aggressor country and the occupiers. “Decommunization” became part of the war against the aggressor (Kasianov, 2021a, s. 185)”.

A rather peculiar approach is observed in the latest texts of P.A. Rudling. On the one hand, he condemns the full-scale Russian invasion and gives a proper assessment of the aggressor's historical propaganda: “The piercing distortions of the RF go beyond the simple falsification of history. Its systematic distortion forms the ideological basis for the policy of revenge and neo-imperial expansion.” At the same time, he believes that this was caused by the Ukrainian authorities themselves: “The ill-considered policy of memory during the time of Volodymyr Zelensky's predecessors ... is used as the basis for a relentless barrage of disinformation in an attempt to discredit the Ukrainian state project as “Nazi”, “genocidal” and “satanic” (Rudling, 2024; 2024a).

So, in order to avoid such “intellectual wanderings” and comprehensively explore the memory issue, we must admit that the main reason for the global confrontation, including the “memory wars”, in the space of Central and Eastern Europe is the aggressive policy of the RF, which embodies the Eurasian /Asian mnemonic model. A description of this model requires a separate publication. Here we will only note that in the form of a hybrid war, the Russian *memory aggression /invasion* to Ukraine began immediately with the declaration of independence in 1991. Initially, it was local in nature and was limited to pseudo-historical and pseudo-legal attempts to undermine the Ukrainian belonging of Crimea, etc. But gradually, a solid anti-Ukrainian component was formed and strengthened in the official historical policy of the Russian Federation, which covered the entire temporal dimension of the past. Such a policy should be classified as historical propaganda. This concept is proposed to define a manipulative type of historical policy, which consciously imposes a completely distorted view of the past in order to achieve political goals, in our case – the mental and physical enslavement of Ukrainians.

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Thus, the historical policy /propaganda of the aggressor state of the RF could be defined as an extreme surrogate model of distortion of the past and undisguised instrumentalization of history for the manipulation of public consciousness in favor of a clearly articulated political goal – not only to violate the state sovereignty of Ukraine and its territorial integrity, but also to destroy Ukraine as a socio-political reality and the national identity of Ukrainians. The memorial invasion of the Russian Federation began much earlier than the military aggression, and performed several interrelated functions: preparing favorable ground for the invasion by erasing the historical consciousness of Ukrainian citizens, provoking conflicts in Ukrainian society around historical heritage; substantiation of territorial claims and, ultimately, as information support for the full-scale invasion itself.

The nature and content of Russian historical propaganda does not depend on the memory policy pursued by the Ukrainian authorities or various domestic political actors. It was not a reaction to the Ukrainian national or nationalist narrative, as claimed by the above-mentioned researchers. On the contrary, the Ukrainian side tried from time to time, and rather ineffectively, only to counter Russian historical encroachment. Moreover, in Ukraine itself, at least until recently, there were still many agents/representatives of memory who spread, and in some cases continue to spread, Russian historical narratives. These include politicians, academics, journalists, bloggers, clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, and others.

It is important to emphasize that the historical propaganda of the Russian Federation is of a total nature, since it is directed not only against Ukraine, but also against many states and peoples. First of all, these are countries that the Russian leadership considers to be the area of its own influence, its own dominance: the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, the countries of the South Caucasus, the countries of the former "socialist camp" – Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, etc. There are many organizations (under the guise of non-state agents of historical policy) and various projects through which Russian imperial narratives are spread. In conditions of full-scale aggression, the so-called "collective West" and even the mythical "Anglo-Saxons" have also become the target of Russian historical propaganda. The aggressor state is constantly trying to manipulate foreign players to increase mnemonic pressure on Ukraine. The most recent example is the appeals of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RF S. Lavrov to the historians of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary to put forward joint claims to Ukraine.

In addition, official Russian historical propaganda is also directed against its own citizens, primarily against non-Russian ethnic communities, in order to prevent the spread of any alternative historical narratives that would undermine the imperial great-power myth. At the same time, it is quite clear that Ukraine is and will remain the main target of the Russian *historical invasion* for a long time, since the aggressor absolutely needs the appropriation of the Ukrainian heritage to legitimize its own historicity.

In terms of updating the methodological tools, it is worth paying attention to the application to our problems of the theory of memory politics of J. Kubik and M. Bernhard, which allows us to identify different types of mnemonic figures and memory regimes. Four ideal types of *mnemonic figures* are proposed: mnemonic warriors, who consider themselves carriers of the only correct historical memorial discourse; mnemonic pluralists, who recognize the plurality of visions of the past and the right to a different interpretation of it; mnemonically indifferent, who are not interested in the politics of memory or those who prefer to stay away from cultural confrontations and "wars of memory"; mnemonically future, who oppose any appeal to the past and ignore its effects on the present and the future (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014).

In the case of the Russian Federation's hybrid aggression against Ukraine since 1991, a situation of asymmetrical opposition was observed. Until 2014, quite aggressive mnemonic warriors operated on the Russian side, while, as it does not seem strange now, mnemonic pluralists prevailed on the Ukrainian side. This situation was largely detrimental to Ukraine, as it allowed Russian memory actors to quite successfully promote their content into the Ukrainian mnemonic space. In 2014, the situation underwent noticeable changes. Since then, we have been talking about the dominance of mnemonic warriors, both on the part of the occupiers and those who oppose their aggressive policy. At the same time, the vast majority of Ukrainian citizens who found themselves in temporary occupation remain passive, falling under the definition of mnemonically indifferent. Therefore, one of the promising options for exiting the occupation regime was the search for optimal ways to return mnemonic pluralists. Although even then it was clear that until the cessation of Russian aggression and the completion of the process of actual de-occupation, this task would have a kind of "deferred" status. From February 24, 2022, this option was finally lost. From now on, we are talking about the long-term prospect of encapsulating the status of mnemonic warriors in a rather rigid interpretation.

It is clear that different groups of mnemonic figures produce different *memory regimes*, that is, they form an orderly way of remembering individual phenomena, events or processes of the past, which is constantly fueled by current socio-political realities. Therefore, the memory regime in conditions of aggression and occupation is proposed to be defined as *totalitarian* and extreme, which,

in addition to the dominant memory model imposed through coercion, including by force of arms, contains several repressed models of currently victimized population groups. In the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, and the occupied parts of the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson regions, citizens with a distinct (and even hidden) Ukrainian identity, Crimean Tatars, other ethnic groups, believers of certain Protestant denominations, and communities of the OCU became carriers of repressed memory.

At the same time, there is every reason to argue that the commemorative coercion by the occupiers generates the foreseeable instability and temporary nature of such a memory regime. This situation allows us to propose several possible scenarios for exiting it and moving to a more favorable and productive memory regime. So, not every day “memorial wars”, but a radical change in the general option – the regime of functioning of historical memory – will allow stopping Russian aggression in this area. The response of the Ukrainian side must also be adequate, diversified and take into account the peculiarities of the historical consciousness of different groups of citizens in these regions.

Conclusions. In summary, we emphasize the innovative aspects of transforming the theoretical model and methodological tools of *memory studies* in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine. The tragic reality prompts researchers to search for valid theoretical foundations for its understanding. First, it is necessary to overcome a systemic methodological error - ignoring the fact of Russian aggression, not only military but also memorial (*historical invasion*). This will allow for an adequate analysis of all the contradictory phenomena of the mnemonic sphere in Central and Eastern Europe. Second, we must abandon the description of memory politics as antagonistic within the framework of the “*post-Soviet nationalist conflict*” model. The theoretical model of “*different civilizations*,” namely the conflict between *Central and Eastern European* memory culture and *Eurasian* one, seems more productive and promising. Ideally, such an approach could bring us closer to exhausting the potential of antagonistic memory and open up opportunities for the formation of a culture of agonistic memory. Third, focus on analyzing the transformation of different types of *mnemonic actors* (actors of memory) and *memory regimes*.

So the deconstruction of the repressive type of historical memory discourse of the aggressor state, the RF, is of both theoretical scientific and practical social interest.

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